

FOOD PRODUCTION AND KINDRED MATTERS, AMONGST THE LUO.

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(Paper read at the 3rd Annual Scientific Meeting held in Nov., 1933.)

SOIL:

134 The production of food must necessarily be associated with knowledge of the soil. The principal soil varieties have been named by the Luo, and the methods appropriate to each variety are well known. Black cotton soil, called "anywang," occurs over a wide area, mainly around the lake shores, and is conspicuous in the locations of Uyoma, Karachwonya, Kasiguna and the Kano Plains. Red earth, called "lwala," is, speaking generally, found further back from the lake, on the higher lands, and is to be found over wide tracts in Central and South Kavirondo, a notable location being North Gem, in Central Kavirondo. Sandy soil, called "kwoyo," is generally found in the neighbourhood of outcrops of granite, which is a prominent feature in many parts. The locations of Asembo in Central Kavirondo, and Suna in South Kavirondo are good examples of areas where this sandy soil is abundant. Murram, called "gu" when solid and "ge" when disintegrated into a soil, occurs in places all over the country, Sakwa and Alego in particular providing many examples of it. Stony soil, called "kite," is to be found over large stretches, particularly in those neighbourhoods where escarpments rise from the regions round the lake. Though the labour involved in the cultivation of this stony soil is very great, where there is pressure of population, every available patch is made to produce food.

RAINFALL:

132 Over certain sections of the country rainfall is very uncertain. The worst locations in this respect are lower Seme, Uyoma, Sakwa, Kadimo, parts of Asembo, Mirunda, Kasiguna and Rusinga. In other districts rainfall is abundant, running from forty to sixty five inches in the year, well distributed over the months, with the exception of January and early February. January is reckoned to be the driest month of the year, and is the month when there is most relaxation from agricultural operations, this being the favourite time for the inter-clan wrestling matches.

781 Contrary to what many would expect, amongst people who
782 periodically suffer from lack of rain, the Luo have developed no system
776 of rain makers. At the top of Usenge Hill in Kadimo, there is still to be seen a site marked by a collection of votive pots, where the local

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telling the rice-growers they must make and maintain their own bunds. Last season the output jumped to 50,000 bags.

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We drove to Nyabondo across the Kano plains. No one loves these plains. They are not only flat, they are absolutely treeless, dry, cracked, windswept, overcrowded, dusty and mean. The soil is 'black cotton', an especially viscous clay in which any vehicle bogs down irrevocably in wet weather—very fertile potentially, but soul-destroying to work. 'The people are like their soil,' I was told. 'They break your heart and yet you go on trying, something's there.'

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Everywhere are circles of a particular euphorbia, a dark-green, harsh, ugly plant that grows about eight feet tall and surrounds every group of huts. When a family head dies, his homestead is evacuated, his huts are left to rot away and only the euphorbia hedge remains, so the plains are covered with old circles as well as those in use. People have tried planting eucalyptus trees, but white ants eat them before they are man-high.

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No individual cultivates his land in one piece. He digs or ploughs a patch here, a patch there, another bit over there, two more bits down the hill and a piece two miles off across the valley that belonged to his mother's uncle. This is known as fragmentation; it is almost universal among Bantu people, exists also among others such as the Luo, and is like a net spread for the feet of Progress in which he becomes enmeshed and stultified.

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The first stage of land enclosure must be for every cultivator to exchange fragments with his neighbours, so that all his land is gathered together in one piece. It is the first stage and also the hardest; land is life's blood to the people; it is like exhorting men to exchange their blood, or their children. Suspicions dart out of their holes like bee-eaters. Won't so-and-so, my neighbour, get an unfair share? The bit he wants to swap for my piece is smaller. Give up my fertile patch by the river where bananas flourish for that barren stretch of hillside? Never! Somewhere there is a trick in all this. . . .

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662 question of bribery and corruption crops up everywhere and
668 all concerned on the official side recognize it as their deepest enemy. But when I put Mr. Ayan's points to them they were a little sceptical. 'Of course there is bribery,' they said, 'but it is not as bad as that. And it is not the people who oppose land reforms, it is the politicians.' Mr. Ayan had just sent a telegram to the Governor asking for the removal of the 'reactionary D.C.' in Kisumu, so relations were naturally a bit strained.

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311 On the way to Maseno we had passed the ostensible *casus*
199 *belli* between District Council and Government: the Kisiani
648 hills, a barren, rocky bluff entirely denuded of vegetation and
134 a scene of the most gruesome erosion, given over to goats
233 browsing on boulders and any indomitable weed that had managed to germinate. This place had been leased by the District Council to the Government for the purpose of afforestation and about 800 acres of trees had been planted at a cost of £13,000.

311 Afforestation is unpopular. Goats were allowed to destroy
648 the Kisiani seedlings and, when the forest department put
668 up fences, people came and tore them down in the night.
199 Others started to cultivate in defiance not only of the terms of the lease, but of regulations which forbid cultivation on steep hillsides. All this, in the official view, was part of a deliberate political campaign to stir up anti-Government feeling.

The Kisiani quarrel brought to a head bad feeling between the Central Nyanza District Council and the Government. All the Councillors are African save for the chairman, who is the D.C. Most of its senior technical staff are European and, in particular, it employs (as do all District Councils with large revenues) a fully qualified accountant to manage its finances.

Those elected Councillors most anxious for unrestricted freedom objected strongly to this accountant. Africans, they said, should have the spending of African money without European interference. Officials retorted that in proper,